THE "NEW VISTA": A HOUSING PROJECT, BURNABY, B. C.

A Review of Its Welfare and Administrative Experience, 1949-59

by

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School of Social Work

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ABSTRACT

With the increasing number of old persons in British Columbia, housing as a basic aspect of total welfare, became a rapidly increasing need. It is important to study the projects which have been initiated in response to this need. For not only is housing a social service on its own merits, but it is also a natural basis for the provision of other social services.

This thesis specially studies the New Vista Society's Senior Citizen's Housing Project in Burnaby, B. C. It was selected because it was one of the first of such projects in the Greater Vancouver area, but also because it is well established enough to provide an opportunity to assess what has been learned in (a) the welfare of the aged related to housing needs, and (b) the administration of a housing project.

The information for the study was gathered through interviews with people most concerned in the evolution and management of the project, the policy-making Board of the Society, and representative tenants. Visits were made to all the types of accommodation in the project.

This study points up both the practical features of housing the aged (e.g., eligibility rating, financial improvisation) and the importance of genuine concern for old people that has characterized this project. It also illustrates the importance of continuity of leadership in further expansion of services. It is also implicit in this study that in the coordination of senior citizens housing experiment which is now being debated in Vancouver, the New Vista Society has a contribution to make.
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Social Work

The University of British Columbia,
Vancouver 8, Canada.

Date May 6, 1959
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Sincere appreciation and thanks are extended to Dr. L. C. Marsh, of the School of Social Work, for his assistance and encouragement. His knowledge of welfare principles and aims was at all times a positive influence on the writer's thinking.

Particular appreciation is also extended to members of The New Vista Society, namely: Miss Margaret Bacchus, Mrs. Laura Jamieson, and Mrs. Margaret Jones, without whose help this study could never have been accomplished.
THE "NEW VISTA": A HOUSING PROJECT, BURNABY, B. C.
CHAPTER I

HOUSING AND THE WELFARE OF OUR AGED.

"Owing to increased longevity (the North American expectation of life has risen from 40 years in 1900 to 67 years today) and a lower birth rate, the proportion in the higher age groups has been steadily rising... The Dominion Bureau of Statistics estimated in 1946, on the assumption that present trends would continue, that the percentage of persons over 65 in B. C. would have risen from 8.3 per cent in 1941 to no less than 13.5 per cent in 1971." 1

Due to the changing balance of the age groups in the population in North America, a great deal of attention is now being focused on ageing people. In fact, so much attention has been drawn to this segment of our population that one is apt to think that there are problems inherent in growing old. But today, older people are more prominent at every point, partly this has happened because of scientific and medical advances. Health measures have lowered the infant and childhood mortality rates, but also fewer people die of the diseases of middle life. Social policies are increasingly taking account of this shift in the population balance by attempting to provide wider and more comprehensive programmes for older people. Many of the problems now referred to as problems of the aged are issues of

health, welfare, recreation, and income-maintenance which have always been with us, and which apply to many groups other than the aged. But retirement practices are not always coordinated with this outlook. The retired person has been presented with a paradox. Medical science has worked diligently to save lives through improved medicines and techniques, but when many people reach the critical age of sixty-five, no one seems to want or need them.

A second set of inferences having a bearing on the seeming exacerbation of the problem associated with ageing is the rapid change the North American culture has undergone with respect to family structure and function. The family is no longer a three-generation kinship group with the grandparents playing an integral part in its functioning. Our materialistic and "prosperity" economy, with its stress on youth and rapid technological change, has displaced the once important role of the older parent as a person of wisdom and counsel. This of course, is not universal and refers in general to the middle class. There are still many cultural and ethnic groups which follow the three-generation pattern. For the average Canadian family, however, the large family home is gone. It has been replaced by the two-generation, suburban home. The movement of the population has been away from the country with its quiet, settled life, to the city and its more transitory, hectic one. With this shifting of population has come the sprawling, impersonal
city metropolitan area. The older person has been "squeezed out" to make room for a more rapidly changing, undefined way of life. Hence the ageing individual or couple are faced with trying to maintain a productive life, deprived of their accustomed social roles.

Enforcement of retirement policies in business, industry, and government have also had their effect in accentuating the problems of the older citizen. As William Hooson says in a recent essay, "There seems no doubt that most Canadians tend to consider old age a liability. For many employees, retirement at sixty or sixty-five years of age is still compulsory... The older person who manages to locate work during periods of seasonal labour shortages is the first to be discharged when production slackens."¹ There would be no problem of the aged if everybody had an income on which to retire. But, many aged people are in the low-income brackets. Age often means widowhood for the married woman and when age is accompanied by disability, earning power is deficient altogether.

The basic welfare aspect, however, is income - what may be and is variously called "security, employment, income-maintenance, etc., homeownership," and so forth. Not all the aged are needy. Many older persons have made adequate provisions for their old age through superannuation or pension plans. But, many have no savings or retirement plan, especially those

that lack a regular employment history, have disabilities, have impaired earning-power, or are widowed. "In the City of Vancouver, for example, there are now roughly 50,000 people over 65 years of age. Of those in receipt of Old Age Pension, i.e., over 70, income tax returns show that roughly four out of five have incomes under $1,000.00 per year.\textsuperscript{1} In other words, it would appear that Old Age Pension is the mainstay of the larger proportion of persons over seventy.

Old Age Pensions were not brought into being in Canada until 1927, when an Act was passed by the Federal Government for the provision of $20.00 a month for old people who: were British subjects, over seventy years of age, had twenty years residence in Canada and could demonstrate their need. In 1945 the Federal Government provided that the Old Age Pension be granted to all Canadians over seventy who qualified as to residence regardless of their means. The amount of pension has gradually increased over the years and only ten years residence is now required. Presently the Federal Government pays $55.00 per month to persons over seventy years of age regardless of their means. In 1950, British Columbia introduced a supplemental allowance on a means test basis for people over seventy and Old Age Assistance for those in the age group of sixty-five to sixty-nine on a means test basis with the same total benefit as Old Age Pension plus the Cost-of-Living Bonus. Today, the total income from both forms of Assistance is a maximum of $75.00

\textsuperscript{1} Vancouver Housing Association: \textit{Building for Senior Citizens}, Vancouver, January 1956, p. 1.
the Provincial Supplement or Cost-of-Living Bonus pays a maximum of $20.00 a month). Unfortunately, however, the increases in the Old Age Pension rates have not kept pace with the rising cost of living. With the added problem of the population shift to the cities and the keen competition for housing in the cities, older people have less and less money with which to compete for living space and the lack of decent housing for rental is crucial in the cities.

Considering all the factors which have resulted in the focus on the older citizen, it is evident that, although they are receiving more attention through increased legislative provisions, there is still a lack of really comprehensive understanding of their social, economic, and psychological needs in any integrated fashion. Social workers are constantly recognizing that "the problem of the aged" must be approached from all angles for a satisfactory and permanent solution.

Housing is one of the most "real" problems that is faced by, not only the old person with low-income, but all persons with inadequate financial resources. Not only is it one aspect of the welfare of the aged but, more universally, it is an aspect of the welfare of all persons. Inadequate housing has often been related to high infant mortality, tuberculosis, and all types of delinquency and crime. Indeed, many meaningful correlations can be made between the high rates of the aforementioned and inferior housing. Better housing is, of course,
not the panacea for all these problems, but it is one aspect in enabling every family to enjoy a more fruitful and productive life.

Any family with a marginal income is apt to suffer when trying to purchase accommodation at competitive market prices. The lower the income of the family, the more important is the percentage of their income which has to be reserved for rent. Shelter is a primary claim in every family budget. When too high a portion of income is spent on rent, the family of low-income has not sufficient money left to meet the cost of the remaining necessities. The cost of housing therefore, means that in many instances, the family members are barred from contributing their maximum to society because their own needs have not been satisfactorily met.

"Inherent among basic social work principles is the right to financial help when the individual is not able to secure the necessities of life, including adequate shelter, through his own resources." 

The provision of adequate housing for people of low-income has become a matter of concern to lay as well as professional people. Social workers have become increasingly aware of the part that housing plays in the general welfare of the family. A family's potential for growth and change in the psychological sense is, to a great degree, dependent upon whether their basic physical needs are being met. Charlotte Towle, in her well-known

book, *Common Human Needs*, states, "In general, we have noted the need to be well fed, properly clothed, and adequately housed as a basis for both physical and mental health."¹ Without a reasonable degree of both physical and mental health, the family will degenerate into a non-productive or dependent unit of society, and this can be observed in both young and old families. Adequate housing alone is not the answer to this problem, but it is one aspect that can give security and hope to the financially underprivileged groups. Life takes on new meaning when concern for basic physical needs is kept to a minimum. Thus it can be seen that the provision of adequate housing for marginal-income groups can aid in the process of establishing better mental hygiene in our communities. So, the situation of insufficient accommodation for people with minimal means is accentuated in the ageing group. The older person, because of his lessening function is less able to resist the stresses of maintaining himself in less-advantageous physical conditions and often becomes isolated, friendless, introverted, and depressed.

There has always been a shortage of decent low-rental housing. Since the end of World War II we have been trying to build enough housing to meet the demand. Old houses have been converted into substandard suites and housekeeping rooms. Because of their problem of low-income, many old persons find

their way to this type of dwelling. Although, these so-called suites are, in general, unsuited to the needs of the older person they provide shelter and are low in rent.

The aspect of lack of proper living accommodation also affects the, perhaps one-third of, old persons who own their own homes.

"The lack of satisfactory living arrangements is a complex problem for older people... It appears, for example, that most older people do not wish to give up their own homes... For many of them their home constitutes the last tangible link with the past and offers the primary basis for maintaining and demonstrating independence. It provides social and emotional security and community status. It constitutes, also, one way of remaining in the community of friends and familiar institutions. Older people are also aware of the tensions created when they try to live in small quarters with the families of their children."

There is a vast difference to an ageing person between their own home which provides remembrances of former times and, rented accommodation. In general, where there is a family home, it is maintained until, through reduced income or ill health, the older person is forced to give it up. The high cost of upkeep of a large home is a formidable expense when an individual is forced to live on Old Age Pension, and increasing incapacity makes housework too great a burden on many old people. Hence, many of these former homeowners find that they must rent smaller, less adequate quarters. Other alternatives, of course, are boarding and nursing homes, but

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unless the older individual's health makes this sort of accommodation necessary, there is generally a preference for remaining independent.

There is no intention to imply that all older citizens should reside in houses or apartments, but;

"The principle of providing suitable housing for old people as a service is based on the idea of helping them to help themselves... The old person needs to feel that he is a citizen first; in an institution he feels he is an old person first. Let us keep the institution for the sick old person, and try to see that the general housing stock in our communities provide for the needs of an increasing number of older citizens."1

Certain types of old people in the low-income bracket are best served by housing projects and it is with this specific group that this study is concerned. The old person who is able to look after himself and keep up a dwelling has specific needs in relation to his housing.

As the individual grows old an increasing amount of time is spent at home due to lessening ability to cover distances. Sight diminishes, hearing decreases, as does the sense of smell, slower reactions generally result in more frequent falls.

"A satisfactory dwelling for anyone undergoing such physical changes would have adequate space, be comfortable, safe and convenient - basic essentials for all dwellings. It would have no dark corners, stairs or passages and would have sufficient light...It would have no slippery surfaces...and the kitchen, bathroom, passageways, closets, cupboards, and shelves would be located and arranged to simplify housekeeping and prevent accidents."2

In addition to the purely physical aspects of housing projects for the older person, there are a number of psychological factors which mean the difference between "a place to live" and "a home". Is there a competent caretaker? How is the project maintained? Who are the neighbours? Is it close to shops, churches, libraries, social and recreational centres and transit routes? Are the occupants within easy reach of friends and companions? The housing should be a part of the neighbourhood so that it can be related to community services and inspire a sense of belonging in its tenants. The theme of planning suitable housing for the aged person in terms of community and appropriate neighbourhood has been vigorously expounded by Lewis Mumford. In a recent article he states that planned housing should make its objective the restoration of old people to the community, not isolation and removal away from the main stream of activity. This is not merely a one-sided story either, a neighbourhood can benefit from the interaction of all age-groups; all give something intangible, as well as receiving a benefit.

Though there have been some important approaches in housing standards in general, there has been very little, in the way of standards, outlined for old people's housing projects. One pioneer effort by the American Public Health Association.

Committee on the Hygiene of Housing made a very comprehensive attempt from a public health point of view. As far as considering the standards for projects from the aspects of house construction and design, budget, services and community, there remains a job of pulling together the pertinent literature in the field and probably a good deal of practical observations to obtain a clear-cut definition of standards.

The fact that is most clearly evidenced in all surveys of the housing situation for older people is the pressing shortage of rental accommodation for the single person of low-income. The Vancouver Housing Association has long recommended that one way of alleviating this problem is through hostels with housekeeping facilities for a measure of independence for the occupants. The employment of hostels would be one method of circumventing the high per capita cost of building for single persons, though it still would not suit the needs of every old person in the low-income bracket.\(^1\) Housing surveys have been going on in Vancouver for the last ten to fifteen years, and they have again and again given the same indication: though thousands of new single-family units have now been built, there is still a need for group-housing, special projects, and particularly, low rent.

The Vancouver Community Chest and Council, has long had a Division on the Welfare of the Aged, which again reflects the focus of attention being directed towards the increase in the number of persons over sixty-five in Vancouver. The Division's

\(^1\) Vancouver Housing Association: *Housing for Our Older Citizens*, March 1949, p. 16-22.
philosophy on ageing has concern for the worth of the individual and seeks methods of utilizing the talents of the older person. They stress the philosophy of moving ahead rather than looking behind at past achievements. They state:

"We know that older persons are capable of growth and that they may be economic assets. We wish to think of them as part of the family and of the community. We are concerned that they have adequate housing and health care, and, in fact, the same sort of services as are needed by mature people of any age."1

There have been an increasing number of local and voluntary "experiments" in the housing field. They are as different in kind as the Vancouver Housing Authority's public projects, the refurbishing of the Glen Drive Cabins by a church group, and an old people's cooperative. Increasing legislation has aided some of these ventures but the need was felt long before the community was mobilized to anything about it.

There is presently a real necessity for coordinating these independent efforts and the experience gained through them. After years of need, two important steps in this direction have recently been taken. One is the setting-up of a Housing Registry. The Registry includes the establishment of a pooled waiting list for non-profit housing projects for senior citizens, and aid to people in finding accommodation through listing accommodations in private homes.

"At last report, there were over 480 applications for the thirty-two suites set aside for pensioners in the new public housing project at 41st and Nanaimo. Beside those already on waiting lists, an average of 15 persons per week apply to the registry for help in finding accommodation. The above figures provide an indication of the demand for housing among elderly people. It is quite certain that the actual need is appreciably greater since there must be many pensioners living in inadequate accommodation or paying a rent they can ill afford who do not know about the various projects or of the existence of the registry and consequently never get to the point of making an application."1

Finally, plans are now pending for the formation of a federation of senior citizen's housing organizations representing the eighteen societies situated throughout the province. If this proposed plan is carried through it should provide a valuable channel of communication for established societies, as well as being a source of advice and aid to newly-proposed groups.

The present study is an attempt to give a descriptive account of one special housing project for old people of low-income, paying specific attention to the welfare and administrative aspects of the project. The specific project, The New Vista Society's Housing Project for Senior Citizens, was chosen because, as one of the first projects of its kind, having commenced operation ten years ago, it provides us with a background of experience in housing the older citizen, and gives an understanding of the realistic problems that must be faced and overcome in this small segment of the overall welfare of the aged.

Figure 1. Early Bungalows
(1949)

Figure 2. Later Bungalows
(1951-1952)
General Description

The New Vista Society Housing Project is situated in the Municipality of Burnaby, near the Burnaby - New Westminster boundaries. There are nine separate projects in all, spread out between Edmonds Street and Mary Avenue to as far as First Street and Eleventh Avenue. The first five projects occupy three paralleled streets off Mary Avenue; numbers six, seven and eight are in the 100 Block East on Eleventh Avenue; number nine is at 1500 - 4th Street. The three groups can be broadly categorized. The first group is composed of duplex bungalows, the second is predominantly apartment blocks of varying architecture but with about a half-dozen duplex bungalows, and the third is a unit specially equipped for old people with arthritis. Since the projects grew piecemeal over a period of ten years, the spacing of the various units was a matter of adaptation rather than long-range planning. When the idea of a housing project for old people of low-income was first conceived, the first project was the only unit to be built. The sites available had a large influence, and the land was actually made available by the Burnaby Municipality for low-rental housing purposes.

The bungalows are laid out in crescents, with wide lawns and shrubs in front of the cottages and small gardens and sheds in the back. Interspersed between the bungalows are arbours
Figure 3. Bachelor Apartment (1954)

Figure 4. Apartment Block (1955)
that provide, in summer, a place for casual meetings. They are "rustically"-built and in time have become very attractively covered with wisteria. The apartment blocks are all two-storey, grey stucco buildings, with wide lawns at both front and back. In the two larger buildings communal meeting rooms have been provided, for various social purposes or passive relaxation, as the tenants wish. The special unit for arthritics is a one-storey stucco building, with special ramps to permit easy access of wheel-chairs, special door-knobs, raised toilet facilities, and similar adaptations. This unit, Lambert House, as it is called in memory of the lady, an arthritis sufferer who donated the property to The New Vista Society, has a large, well-furnished meeting room for the residents, and an attached room that has been installed expressly for the use of the Canadian Arthritis and Rheumatism Society, when and if they find it practicable.

There are 82 cottages for couples and 12 for single persons. The inside of each cottage contains an entrance hall, a living room, a bedroom, a bathroom, a kitchen, and a utility room. The overall floor area in the couple's cottages is 540 square feet per dwelling, of which 126 is minimum for the living room, 122 feet for the bedroom and kitchen.

In the single cottages the total floor area is 440 square feet. The living room is the same area as that of the double cottages with the adjustment made in the size of the bedroom and kitchen. The rooms in all the cottages are brightly painted and are redecorated each time there is a change of
Figure 5. Apartment Block
(1956)

Figure 6. Lambert House
(1957)
tenancy. There is a maintenance man who looks after all painting and repairs to the bungalow facilities. Tenants in the single cottages are provided with oil stoves for heating and have to pay for their own fuel oil and electricity.

The apartment blocks provide accommodation for 27 couples and 51 single persons. The couple's apartments have a floor area of 475 square feet. This is broken up into an entrance hall, a bedroom, a bathroom, and a living room with a kitchen alcove. The single apartments have 360 square feet of floor area broken up into an entrance hall, bed-sitting room with kitchen alcove, and a full bathroom. These apartment blocks have janitorial services for public spaces, and heating is provided by a central heating unit. Tenants pay for their own electric consumption, and a stove and refrigerator are supplied.

Lambert House contains 4 apartments for couples and 8 for single persons. The couple's apartments have 560 feet of floor area also in the same design as the couple's apartments in the apartment blocks. The single apartments have 350 square feet of floor area similar to the design of the bachelor apartments. These suites are heated, appliances are supplied, and janitorial services are provided from the apartment blocks for the public rooms.

The idea of a "New Vista" was originally conceived as a
very different sort of Vista. On December 18, 1943, The New Vista Society was incorporated through the initiative of the late Mr. E. E. Winch, long-time M. L. A. for the Burnaby constituency. The original purpose of the Society was to provide a "Half-way" House for female patients discharged from the Provincial Mental Hospital, especially those who has no family to help them make an adjustment back to the community. With the incorporation of the Society, a large old home which had been purchased and redecorated was put into operation to assist these rehabilitated women make a re-entry to normal living. After running the "Vista" until May 15, 1947, it was sold to the Provincial Government when they recognized the need it was fulfilling and decided to operate it themselves as part of their mental health services. Mr. Winch, who has been described by all who knew him as, "a prodigious man", was temporarily deprived of a cause and characteristically turned his attention to another problem - determined to get action. The shortage of housing for old people of low-income impressed him as an issue of priority. On January 29, 1947, The New Vista Society passed a special resolution to add to the objectives of the Society. The resolution was, in essence, the objective of "providing housing for elderly people of low income". With the $10,000.00 secured from the sale of the "Vista" to the British Columbia Government, The New Vista Society was able to
start on its first housing project for elderly people. The first project was completed in 1949 with the financial assistance of a grant from the Provincial Government and a low-interest loan from Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and housed about twenty-four people. Today (1959) about three hundred persons are residents; the needs have kept both The New Vista Society and its housing construction going.

The New Vista Society projects provide an opportunity to study accommodation, in cottages and apartment blocks, including units for single persons and couples; also included are special facilities for people with a particular health problem, arthritis.

To collect material, an outline was devised taking into account the factors to be considered in making the study. From this outline a series of interviews was planned to cover all aspects of the factors concerned.

In carrying out the study, the persons most directly concerned with administration and management were interviewed; the two members of the Admissions Committee were interviewed, the President of the Society was interviewed, and the Secretary-Treasurer of the Society, who is also Project Manager, was interviewed. Informal interviews were also conducted on a drop-in basis with several of the tenants, both married and single.

This study is an attempt to assess the lessons that have
been learned by The New Vista Society throughout their ten years of operating a housing project for senior citizens, and how their experience can aid in both the understanding of the problem of housing older people and in planning future projects.
A much more meaningful picture could be gained of New Vista if it were possible to know each tenant. To examine their reactions to their housing and how they manage in their day to day living; to know, for instance, how different their accommodation is from what it was where they used to live and how much more easily and enjoyably they manage to perform their daily tasks. This truly is the greatest success that a housing project can afford: to enrich and broaden the individual's horizons, to be in fact, a "New Vista".

To attempt to obtain a descriptive picture of New Vista as a living community, a sample section of the people in thirty of the hundred and eighty-four dwellings (about sixteen percent) was studied. There is reason to believe that the facts about these twenty couples and ten single women represent fairly well the story of the general New Vista population. Certainly the facts of income levels and age distribution, for example, illuminate immediately the contribution which this project is making to both housing and welfare in this community. The couples, for the purpose of some tables are considered
as separate from the single persons, since important differences of circumstances as well as housing units are involved in these two "categories".

As it might be expected there is a wide range of ages represented in New Vista. This is due to the fact that eligibility requirements do not depend on age per se, either maximum or minimum. The only stipulation made is that no person under seventy years is accepted for housing unless he is past working age or is not able to work because of physical handicaps etc., This is a very sensible and indeed a desirable provision - indicating that housing is needed not only for the aged, but for disadvantaged groups, whether in terms of income or working capacity. The table below shows the age range and distribution.

Table 1. **Age Distribution**
(All Persons in Sample)

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<td><strong>Under 70</strong></td>
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<td><strong>70 or Over</strong></td>
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| Total     | 50     |
Looking now at the origin of the tenants it will be seen that half of the tenants came from the City of Vancouver which is typically the largest population area. The other half of the residents came from not only Burnaby, New Westminster, and West Vancouver, but also from North Surrey, Langley, Ladner, and White Rock.

There is evidence that the tenants were formerly occupying units in the older and more deteriorated districts of the Greater Vancouver area. In fact, the determining factor for entrance into the project is the principle, "the greater the need, the higher the preference".¹

Table 2a. Areas from Which Tenants Came

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<td>Burnaby, New Westminster</td>
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<td>Other Urban Areas</td>
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<td>Rural Areas</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Table 2b. Former Dwelling Areas

(Vancouver Only)

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<td>Downtown &amp; West End</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East Vancouver</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Boundary to Ontario;33rd to Fraser River)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pinpointing on a map of Vancouver indicated certain sub-areas within the City as former areas of residence. Some are predominantly rooming and boarding house areas, and others have a fringe of older, deteriorated houses where suites might be found that are low enough in rent for a pensioner's budget. Although applications are accepted from any point in British Columbia, only 13.3 per cent of the tenants in the sample came from outside the Greater Vancouver area. None in the sample were from outside the Lower Mainland area. Out of nearly three hundred residents in the project only one couple so far has come from outside the main urban region. There is perhaps some evidence
here, that the tenants of New Vista are drawn from areas where there is less chance for the older person to supplement his income, either through providing some of his own foodstuffs or by doing odd jobs.

One of the stipulations made in the Elderly Citizen's Housing Aid Act (B. C.) is that grants are made to municipalities or non-profit organizations for "the purpose of providing homes for elderly citizens, to assist in the construction or reconstruction of low-rental housing units for elderly citizens of low income who are unable to purchase adequate accommodation according to their needs." The New Vista Society has interpreted this to mean that individual income should not exceed $75.00 per month (Old Age Pension plus the Cost-of-Living Bonus) or $150.00 for couples. Quite a variety of other sources of income were found besides the Federal Old Age Pension and the Provincial Old Age Assistance and Social Assistance, namely: War Veteran's Allowance, British Military Pension, Disabled Person's Allowance, Canadian Government and Teachers Superannuation, and company pensions such as British Columbia Electric and Canadian National Railways pensions: but many of these are very small indeed and contributed only a minor amount of the total income. The figures in the two tables which follow are small; but they are interesting in showing the range and type of incomes for "retired persons". It is to be noted that only one-tenth of the single persons and a little more than one-third

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of the couples have a significant supplement to the basic Old Age Security Allowance (other than the Provincial Bonus). Only 15 per cent enjoy "other sources" which are bigger than the standard pension.

Table 3a. Sources of Income: Single Persons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Age Pension (70) with Bonus</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Age Assistance (65) or Social Allowance with or without Other Sources</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Age Pension plus &quot;Other Pensions&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3b. Sources of Income: Couples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Old Age Pension (70) plus Bonus</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Old Age Assistance (65) or Social Allowance only</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Old Age Pension(70) plus other &quot;Pensions&quot;</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Old Age Pension(70) no others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main support a &quot;pension&quot; other than Old Age Pension(70) or Old Age Assistance (65)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Income for the married couples ranges from $71.06 to $150.00 per month. This lower amount was the total income of one couple who were supplementing their income from their bank account. The average income for couples is $137.04. This average is below the floor of $150.00, which would be received if both individuals were in receipt of Old Age Pension plus Bonus, due to a number of factors: husband or wife both being under sixty-five years, partial bonus because of other means, and a large proportion of the residents being on at least partial War Veteran’s Allowance which pays a maximum benefit of $145.00 a month.

Income of the single persons ranges from $75.00 to $85.24 per month with the majority clustered around the lower amount (overall average income, $76.02 per month). This is slightly per person than the average amount among the married couples whose income averages to $68.54 per person per month. Financially, however, the married couples are in a little better position than the single person. Rents in the units for couples range from $25.00 to $42.00 per month, although most of the couples pay the lower rent, and rents for single persons are from $20.00 to $26.00 per month. The following table shows the rents for all the projects, giving a break-down of the types of accommodation both double and single units. Only heating has been taken into consideration, other provisions have been stipulated in the latter part of Chapter I.
Table 4. Rents at New Vista

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Accommodation</th>
<th>Total Units</th>
<th>Monthly Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bungalows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Units</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$20.00 #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double Units</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>25.00 #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Units</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>23.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double Units</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambert House</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Units</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double Units</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Units not including heat

The following table shows the maximum and minimum incomes of the single persons and couples in each of the three types of accommodation. Although in one instance, a very high proportion of income is expended on rental this is because the income of this couple is so very low. As a general trend it will be noted that the single person is paying a higher percentage of his income per month on rent (i.e. the couples in the apartments pay approximately seven per cent less of their income on rent than do the single persons) which puts him in a much less advantageous position in purchasing accommodation.
Table 5. Portion of Income Spent on Rent

(Based on Maximum and Minimum Incomes of Tenants by Types of Accommodation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Accommodation</th>
<th>Incomes Maximum - Minimum</th>
<th>Percentage of Income Spent on Rent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bungalows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>$75.00 - 75.00</td>
<td>26.6 - 26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double</td>
<td>150.00 - 71.06</td>
<td>16.6 - 35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>75.00 - 75.00</td>
<td>30.6 - 30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double</td>
<td>150.00 - 145.00</td>
<td>23.3 - 24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambert House</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>85.24 - 75.00</td>
<td>30.5 - 34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double</td>
<td>150.00 - 150.00</td>
<td>28.1 - 28.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The single person in the low-income category is much more hard-pressed to stretch his dollars, and because rents make less provision for the single old person, and housing is a primary consideration, he must skimp in the important areas of; food, clothing, and recreation. The rents paid at New Vista are low in comparison to competitive rents in the community and the older person who is able to obtain accommodation there is indeed
fortunate. In The Adequacy of Social Allowances Report it was noted that, in the low-income group studied, the average rental paid by single persons per month was $27.85 with two person family units paying an average of $42.03 monthly.\(^1\) When one considers the quality of housing that is available for rental in the community for these amounts it can be readily seen that those people with low income are living in substandard quarters. In considering the single person at New Vista it will be noted that the average amount spent on rent before coming into the project was $31.25 a month, a higher amount than paid by recipients of Social Allowance. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that Old Age Pension plus the Cost-of-Living Bonus amounts to $20.00 more per person than Social Allowance. One of the single persons at New Vista had been living in another old person's housing project, but was given notice to move because of the death of her spouse. Another woman was forced to move when the rent in her accommodation was being raised $10.00 a month. The other single persons, before coming to New Vista, had lived either in damp basements or attic housekeeping rooms that were most inadequate when considering the physical limitations of the occupants.

Among the couples, the previous rental paid had been an average of $43.50 a month (quite similar to the amount paid by Social Allowance recipients). Three of the couples were in

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\(^1\) Report to the Community Chest & Council on the Adequacy of Social Assistance Allowances in the City of Vancouver, Vancouver, September 1958, p. 38
sightly advantageous positions financially, because; one couple owned their own dilapidated cottage, (the only couple ever taken in New Vista who had) one couple were paying very minimal rent in a condemned house, and one couple who were living in an old Kingsway Auto Court received a $15.00 a month rent reduction for answering the telephone. Most of the couples had been living in basement suites in private homes and several, especially those with arthritis, were handicapped by having to climb a great number of stairs.

Thus, it can be seen that in the community the single person over seventy spent approximately 35 per cent of his income on rent in comparison with an average of approximately 30 per cent while living at New Vista. Married couples in the general community spent approximately 29 per cent of their income on rent as contrasted with an average of approximately 24 per cent at New Vista.

In The New Vista Society Project there are 184 living units. For couples there are, as has been previously mentioned, 82 cottages, 27 apartments, and 4 special apartments for arthritics. For single persons there are; 12 cottages, 51 apartments, and 8 special apartments for arthritics. These aforementioned units comprise a total of 113 units for married couples and 71 for single persons, a ratio of about 3 to 2. The ratio frequently quoted by some people with experience in the housing field is
that 3 times as many single units as married units are needed. (Though 2 to 1 is often used as a "working principle"). New Vista would need 265 more single units than at present before this requirement was reached. Actually the Society has found that often they have as many as 5 times as many single applicants as married ones. This further points up the more pressing need for accommodation on the part of the single person with low-income who has less chance to share his rent. The New Vista Society has been faced with a problem common to most organizations that are trying to provide housing for elderly people. Naturally, the cost of building housing for single persons is higher than for couples on a per capita basis. If government loans or charitable grants take no account of this factor, the single person becomes automatically less privileged, and will never have enough accommodation in low-rental housing projects. New Vista has made a real contribution in housing the single person. It was the first project of its kind to offer accommodation for the single old person through recognizing that this group comprised the major area of need in housing old people of low-income.

In the United States there have been some attempts made at measuring the amount of sickness among the general population. "The National Health Survey showed that 'On any given day, one in every seven men and women aged 65 and over is disabled, and four out of seven of these (8% of all aged persons) are disabled because of major chronic diseases or impairments.' In a survey of the retired population of St. Petersburg, Florida, 36% of the group said they had one or more chronic illnesses."¹

These percentages, of course, are not Canadian and include those people who are in hospitals and institutions, but they do give some indications as to the health and general level of functioning of people in the over sixty-five age group. Out of fifty tenants at New Vista, five have arthritis in various stages and one has multiple sclerosis. This is quite a low percentage when compared with the aforementioned group, but it may be accounted for by two factors; that the sample was chosen on bases other than illness or that only persons who were well enough to maintain their own dwellings have made application for and are living at New Vista. In the main the older person suffers from the as yet unconquered ills - the degenerative diseases. The prospect of remaining independent may well be a preventative factor in the maintenance of functioning in the older person. There is far greater tendency for the ageing person to give in to his illness if he feels there is no reason for him to keep functioning.

New Vista, in its initial stages, was planned as a part of the Edmonds community. The first five projects were purposely located near a community hall, shopping center, and transit routes. They were built in a rapidly expanding urban area where the tenants could be amongst younger people with children. The most recent four projects, of necessity, had to be located some distance away and do not have as many advantages in this respect,
although there is a large shopping centre three blocks south and transit routes two blocks from these units. The apartments and Lambert House are in a relatively undeveloped area, but there is every indication that rapid urban expansion will bring more community services to this region. In fact, the New Vista in this region may well become the community center as the private housing increases.

There are churches of three denominations near both the duplexes and apartments. Several of the ladies sing in the choirs and rides to and from church are frequently arranged by members of the congregations. The Burnaby Public Library has a Bookmobile service to the duplexes, the apartments, and Lambert House, in fact, the van is driven right up the driveway in the latter project. The library is only a few minutes walk from the duplexes and so is accessible to tenants who prefer a wider selection of books. There is, however, a notable lack of community and recreational centers which could offer planned or drop-in activities and programme for the retired person. This kind of service would seem very important where there is a large concentration of old people with a good deal of "time on their hands".

The New Vista Society, in the person of the Project Manager, actually provides many unspecified services to tenants. Often tenants are short of furniture, or even lacking in equipment altogether, and this is the place where the ingenuity of the
management comes into play. A first-hand knowledge of community resources is a necessity for anyone operating such a project, for example, when a referral to the Burnaby Social Service Department is warranted, and when a church group or auxiliary might be able to help in an emergency situation. One service that the management of New Vista is often called upon to supply is the placing of a tenant in a hospital, nursing or boarding home when they are no longer able to care for themselves. The tenants have the security of knowing that their "home" is waiting for them until they decide they can no longer manage on their own. Relatives are often asked to help the ageing person face the realization that they can no longer care for themselves, but no pressure is exerted by the Society if the individual wishes to retain his unit. This is an inevitable problem that any housing project for older persons must be prepared to face and formulate some policy on.

The Society has also made a room available at Lambert House for the Canadian Arthritis and Rheumatism Society to use as a treatment center for not only New Vista tenants, but any and all arthritis sufferers in the neighbourhood. So far this has not been carried out, but the room remains ready for the time when the demand arises.

Within the project the tenants have initiated a recreational association to meet some of their needs for social outlets. The New Vista Recreation Association functions mainly in the
apartment buildings. The tenants have broadened their constitution to include, as members, any friends of the tenants or people from the neighbourhood who wish to join but so far no one from the outside community has joined. The impetus for the formation of this type of group seems to have come from the original tenants in the duplex cottages at Mary Avenue. When the duplexes were first built, the ladies formed a sewing and knitting group and held a yearly bazaar at the Edmonds Community Hall. However, over the years these original instigators have died and their small group has virtually ceased to exist. The present reaction association was helped in formation by a member of the Board of Directors who was also a professional group worker. It has been found that merely helping the tenant association to form, however, is not enough. They appear to need some assistance in maintaining imagination, initiative and visualizing new and broader programmes of activities. There would actually be sufficient work for a part-time group worker if there were financial provision for such a person.

The outside community, aside from the library and church-going arrangements, also provides the tenants of The New Vista Society Project with the interested assistance of the Burnaby Lion's Ladies Club. Once a month this group drives the duplex-dwellers down to the Recreation Association's room on Eleventh Avenue to a whist drive and serves tea to them afterwards. It
has been observed, that like many other charitably-oriented groups, there is a tendency for the Lion's Ladies to do things for the tenants rather than enabling the tenants to do things for themselves. There is always a tendency for people, especially old people, to sit back and let others do things for them, but there needs to be a greater recognition by volunteer groups that old people have a contribution to make and frequently need some help in realizing that they can still be productive citizens.
CHAPTER III

HOW NEW VISTA OPERATES

As has been previously stated, The New Vista Society was incorporated under the Societies Act on December 18, 1943. In January of 1947, a special resolution was passed by the Society to incorporate a new objective: "To establish, maintain, or support residential accommodation for old age pensioners or persons of similarly low income". When the policy-making body was first set up in 1943, it was decided by the membership to keep the Board of Directors within a limit of five or six members. This decision was based on the observed experience of Boards of other organizations which were planning to build and which, because of their large, unwieldy size, took too long to make decisions. The first Board of Directors of The New Vista Society was ably headed by Mr. E. E. Winch as President. Mr. Winch remained President until June 28, 1945 when he became Secretary-Treasurer, operating the business affairs of the Society, until his death. On the aforementioned date, Mrs. Laura Jamieson became President of The New Vista Society and remained in this position until January 1948, when the first project was well under way.

The present Board Of Directors consists of: President, Mrs.
Jamieson, Vice President, Mrs. Margaret Jones, Secretary-Treasurer and Project Manager, Miss Margaret Bacchus, Mrs. Grace McCorquodale, Mr. Alan Winch, Mr. Alan Emmot, and a representative of the Burnaby Lion's Club, Mr. Robert World.

The Board of Directors meets once a month and decides all matters of policy and makes all major decisions. The Manager of the Project operates under the stated policy of the Board, and there is no salary attached to the position. The Manager is herself a member of the Board, has been involved in the project since its inception and knows its operations well, and is retired from her former occupation. The kind of policy determined by the Board is related to financial management, building, tenant selection and general matters of operation. One interesting piece of policy that differs from that of many similar projects for older people is that when one member of a married couple dies the remaining member is not required to move out. The old person can stay in the unit he has been in if he can afford the rent, or take the first single unit that becomes vacant, but he must continue to pay the rent of the double unit until a vacancy occurs among the single units. The knowledge of this policy among the tenants gives them an added feeling of security. This is especially desirable for widows who frequently still wish to keep house for themselves. This security of tenure is an important feature in providing for the welfare of the aged individual and is a feature which might well be emulated by other such projects.
Although the Board of Directors is the administrative and policy-making body of the Society, in reality, a good deal of the policy of the Project is laid down by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Under Section 16 of the National Housing Act, building specifications and various items relating to rents have been detailed in an Operation Manual.

In March of 1953, another special body, which has certain statutory powers over The New Vista Society, came into being. On this date a special Act was passed in the B.C. legislature which set up a Board of Trustees of The New Vista Society; "To acquire and hold upon trust, all property of The New Vista to the end that such property shall be devoted perpetually to charitable uses as defined in The New Vista Society's charter."

The Board of Trustees is a kind of "watch-dog" to ensure that when the original members of the Society die, the purposes of the Society will be carried on. They actually own the property of the Society and can intervene if they feel that the Board of Directors are not fulfilling the objectives and purposes of the charter. The Board of Trustees is made up of; one life trustee, Mr. Harold Winch, (son of Mr. Ernest Winch) one member of the Burnaby Municipal Council, one member of the Burnaby Lions Club, and one member of The New Vista Society.

Admissions Procedure and Policy

Under the Board of Directors there is an Admissions Committee, made up at present of Miss Bacchus and Mrs. Jones. The

1. Revised Statutes of Canada, 1952, National Housing Act, Chapter 188.
Board gives this committee practically full power for admissions. All persons applying for low-rental housing at New Vista are personally visited in their present accommodation by a member of the Admissions Committee. The Board has made it their policy to maintain a waiting list; the result of which is that there is always someone ready to move in whenever a unit becomes vacant. To date this has been so successful that the project has never lost a dollar on rent.

Tenant selection for the New Vista Housing Project is based on three criteria of need: adequacy of present housing, amount of income, and health. The primary priority is given to applicants with the most inferior housing accommodation. Because a member of the Admissions Committee visits the accommodation the applicant is occupying at the time of application, they are able to assess the relative priority of need for housing of the person by direct reference to his present living conditions. Secondary priority is given to persons who have inadequate income. The lower the income of the individual or couple, the better their chances for housing when it becomes available. Third order in priority is given to applicants with health problems. For example; if a person with arthritis or heart disease is living in quarters that necessitate climbing a great number of stairs, they are given preference over people who do not have health problems. As applications come in, the waiting list is constantly revised to take into account new
orders of priority. In placement of older people within the project, preference is given to people aged over seventy for the cottages, and to people aged over eighty for the apartments. The use of this general age distinction is made on the premise that the older age-group are often unable to maintain a garden and prefer the smaller area of an apartment.

There is no standard application form for admission to The New Vista Society Project. When the Project first began operation a phone call, or a referral from an interested party was sufficient to place an older citizen in the housing. Over the past years, however, the applicant has been required to write a letter to the Society Secretary, outlining their age, present type of housing, income, and state of health. Unlike some projects of its kind, The New Vista Society Project has no upper age-limit for entry into its accommodation. It has been the feeling of the Board of the Society that a letter gives a better introduction to the individual's personality than a rather rigid application form. This personal letter gives the members of the Admissions Committee some idea of the person's cultural background, their level of mental functioning, and their forthrightness. In evaluating the individual's "social capacity" for housing, the committee finds it very difficult on the basis of one interview to assess their ability to care for themselves, and also their ability to get along with other tenants. After being involved in selection for some time,
however, there is an element of intuitiveness in the decisions of the committee. It has been found that in the few instances when a "difficult tenant" has been placed in the project, the social pressure from within the housing community is sufficient to cause the occupant to move of his own volition. One fairly good gauge of an applicant's ability to care for himself is his ability to keep his previous dwelling clean. When there is some doubt as to whether a person is really able to care for himself, his family is interviewed, to permit a closer judgement. Another criterion on which persons applying for housing are often judged is cooperation in supplying the Society with all information that is pertinent to their situation, including exact income, and notification when they change their residence. The selection committee always insists, wherever possible, that applicants see the project before they consider moving into it.

Tenant grievances are dealt with on an individual basis at New Vista. The grievances are generally concerned with frictions between the occupants, such as noise, disagreements about the use of facilities etc., and seldom reach major proportions. So far, the management has found that there has never been a necessity for drastic action, and usually these matters can be handled at a managerial level without having to involve the Board of Directors. The main lesson that has been learned, say the management of New Vist, after working in an old person's housing project for many years, is that "things shouldn't be
taken too seriously at the time they occur". A "cooling down" period is essential in the first approach to problems when they arise, and it has frequently been found that situations clear up if time is allowed.

**Financing**

The construction of the nine separate projects of The New Vista Society was financed jointly by the Provincial Government, the Society, and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Under the terms of the Elderly Citizens Housing Aid Act, the Provincial Government makes grants of up to one-third of the cost of construction to a municipality or non-profit organization which is building housing for elderly citizens of low income. This Act also stipulates that the municipality or non-profit organization concerned must make a cash grant towards the cost of construction equal to at least one-tenth of the total cost of construction.\(^1\) These provisions helped Vista; and the remainder of the costs of building were financed by a loan from the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Over the years of construction the Society has paid interest on loans ranging from three per cent on the first project to 3\(^\frac{3}{4}\) per cent on the most recent one. When The New Vista Society built its first series of duplexes they had the $10,000.00 realized from the sale of the "Vista" to the Provincial Government and did not have to borrow such a large portion of the cost of the buildings from C.M.H.C. They were able to have this first loan amortized over

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a twenty year period. With later projects, however, involving rising building costs and larger loans, their repayment had to be amortized over forty year periods to maintain low rents. Payments for each project are made on two-monthly, four annual, or three semi annual bases.

One difficulty the Society has had in financing stemmed from the fact that neither the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation nor the Provincial Government made their money available to the Society until construction had commenced. Although the Society had to contribute one-tenth of the cost of the construction, which had been subscribed mostly through private contributions, this is a rather meagre amount with which to begin actually building, so a short-term loan from a bank had to be obtained but there has been no difficulty about this kind of arrangement. In practice, The New Vista Society has also found that they have had very little difficulty in obtaining grants from the Provincial Government. They attribute this to the fact that none of their requests for money have been too high. By building only a limited number of dwellings at a time, their estimated requirements are kept moderately low.

The Provincial Government makes no stipulation about physical standards of buildings, but leaves this function to C. M. H. C., even though they pay one-third of the cost of the building, outright. This is perhaps through a desire not to involve the Province in matters that are more appropriately the concern of the Federal Government, though it also escapes admission of responsibility of housing inadequacy. The Central Mortgage and Hous-
ing Corporation, on the other hand, approves plans of construction, supervises construction closely, and in general ensures that all requirements are met as outlined in the National Housing Act. When construction is completed on a project, C. M. H. C. inspects the premises every year to make sure that the standards are being maintained.

It is interesting to note here that Section 16 of the National Housing Act makes provision for Societies to build housing for old age pensioners with a "limited dividend" of up to five per cent. Section 16, besides making provisions for housing for old age pensioners, also offers loans to "limited dividend societies" to build for people of higher income. Such a society could be a semi-commercial enterprise making up to five per cent profit on its operations. None of the societies building for old age pensioners pay dividends, however, but operate strictly as non-profit, in effect, "charitable" organizations. The Provincial Government stipulates that low-rental housing for old age pensioners, for which it will grant one-third of the cost of construction, must be erected by non-profit organizations.

In this area, the two governments are seemingly at cross-purposes.

Another interesting aspect of financing is that under Section 16 of the National Housing Act, there is no provision for subsidies applied to an occupant's rent. C. M. H. C. sets an "economic rent" to be paid by tenants as a whole, which is intended to cover operating and maintenance costs and pay back the capital and interest on the mortgage. Under Section 36
of the National Housing Act, however, which provides for housing of people of any age-group with low income, including senior citizens, and which is financed jointly by the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government, a subsidy is permitted. This seems somewhat inconsistent, as housing built under Section 36 is, to all intents and purposes, the same type of housing provided by most old person's housing projects, and particularly the kind that New Vista provides. It is difficult to understand the logic of this state of affairs. Perhaps if the limited dividend of five per cent was restricted to building for persons of income higher than those on old age pension (as few charitable organizations which are building for old people of low income have any desire to make even a minimal profit), the possibility of a rent subsidy would be facilitated. It is possible to visualize a rent-subsidy fund that might be built up from private donations.

Current expenses of operating New Vista are, of course, taken into account by the rents set by C. M. H. C. The operating costs consist of land and sewer taxes, fire insurance, heating of the apartment blocks, water, building maintenance and repair, ground maintenance, and caretaker's services. There are only three actual employees of the Society. These employees are: a maintenance man who looks after painting and building repairs such as broken fixtures, replacement of facilities etc., and a caretaker and his wife who live rent free in one of the couple's apartments and maintain the apartment blocks
and Lambert House.

The New Vista Society is justifiably proud of the fact that unlike many charitable organizations, it pays its full share of taxes. Land tax exemption is given to religious and charitable organizations, but it has been the feeling of the Board of Directors that too many organizations take advantage of this exemption and deprive municipalities of part of one of their few forms of revenue. New Vista, therefore, has adopted a "pay as you go" policy, aiming to benefit as wide a community as possible.

Rent collecting is done by the management once a month. The Project Manager collects the rents in person at the duplexes, apartments, and Lambert House by going to a central place, to which the tenants come with their rent. It will be clear from what has already been set out, that there is a decidedly personal and friendly quality about this project. It has penetrated many of the relationships between management and tenants, as it does this particular function. Arrears have never been a Vista problem of any dimension.
In retrospect, there are several salient points in housing projects planned and administered for the older citizen. They may be summed up under three headings: segregation, variety of accommodation, and administration. All can be considered from more than one point of view, and they are explored in this concluding section in an attempt to assess the lessons we can learn from The New Vista Society's pioneer effort in this field.

**Segregation**

Segregation is well known as an evil in relation to racial minorities; but in recent years it has been recognized in its relation to socio-economic groups. With the best intentions it is easy to segregate old people by building institutions for the aged, and by setting up housing projects "for the aged". But old people need housing projects, not because they are old, but because of restricted income - a fact which they share with many other kinds of families. There is no doubt from the opinions expressed by most writers in the field of housing the aged that segregation of the older person is much to be deplored.

Only emotional isolation can accrue from segregation from families, neighbours and friends, and removal from normal interests and responsibilities in the community.\(^1\)

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P. R. U. Stratton of the Vancouver Housing Association has this to say;

"It is no doubt undesirable on social grounds to have large communities of people drawn from one age group segregated in a single project. If, however, public housing projects for senior citizens are kept on a small scale and scattered over a number of different neighbourhoods, where the tenants can maintain contact with their former community associations, or live close to relatives, this objection ceases to hold good."  

One of the major considerations is how large is the project in which the old person lives. If the project involves a great number of older people, there may almost automatically be isolation from the wider community. But sometimes these large projects are favoured without proper regard to their human or psychological consequences because it is cheaper (per capita) to build large units. As the Vancouver Housing Association in one of its publications argues;

"While it is difficult to fix any specific upper limit of size to senior citizens' housing projects, it is generally accepted that the segregation of large numbers drawn from one age-group in a single project is undesirable. Small projects housing under 100 persons are therefore to be preferred. They have the additional advantage that, where a number of small projects are planned, they can be located in different neighbourhoods and so afford tenants an opportunity of retaining their former associations."  

New Vista, by having its projects spread throughout the community in three different locations, has avoided strict isolation in the social sense. However, there are some 150 or more

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old persons living in the duplexes above Mary Avenue, and about 105 living in the apartment house group, as compared with only 16 people living at Lambert House. In the two first named, these are too large in some respects, but the Mary Avenue Projects are located in the midst of a well-populated area of private homes, housing family groups of all ages including children and teenagers. The Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, acting through the National Housing Act, at present limit the number of old people who can reside in public housing projects to five per cent of the total accommodation. Something like this figure is favoured by most authorities in this field, but it is a "rule of thumb". Lewis Mumford suggests, with better logic, that provisions for housing old people should reflect the ratio of the old people in the general population. If Mumford's suggestion has merit then a larger percentage than five per cent is required in British Columbia housing projects, where approximately 10 per cent of the population are over sixty-five. Old people themselves often indicate preference for companionship of people their own age. This may be because of their own reticence about having anything to offer a younger group; nevertheless the attitude is prevalent particularly among those old persons who have been living with their children.

Segregation may also be considered not only as segregation from social contacts, but also geographically - in terms of

1. Mumford, Lewis, loc.cit. p. 193
distance from community services and facilities. This situation is often found because of the costs of land, and the availability of property. This type of isolation is very easy to create, because of financial considerations, but must be avoided. The New Vista Society has made an effort to choose sites with available facilities such as transit routes, shopping centers, and recreational centers; but because of their somewhat piecemeal growth and development, and the limitations of available land, this has not always been possible. Choice of sites was dependent on which land the Burnaby Municipality made available at a low cost. In this type of building, however, long-term planning is sacrificed for the immediate financial gain. Fortunately, New Vista has been built in areas of low population density, and with the growth of population it is hoped will come better community services. The Eleventh Avenue apartments are becoming gradually less and less isolated, and their main drawback at present is that they are not within walking distance of the entertainment world.

It is always important to remember at this point, that people have to leave their old homes to come to the new. Patricia Sharp observes from her study of four representative housing projects:

"Whatever happens, a major disadvantage of building large housing projects, or of building in relatively isolated areas, is the consequent re-location that must occur for a large number of tenants. Moving into the project means a moving away from previous ties, and often it is difficult for the old people
to form new ones. Thus adjustment within the housing project includes the problem of accepting or getting used to a new location; this is compounded by the fact that so many of the tenants have had several moves prior to this last one."

Another form of segregation that is relatively prevalent among housing projects generally is economic segregation. Because of the public attitudes which continue to prevail about any sort of subsidized or low-rent housing, there is a strong tendency towards "economy measures" in housing construction, resulting in rapid deterioration of buildings and obvious discrimination as to its occupants. In British Columbia, the government has been generous in its policy towards housing projects for elderly people; but it stipulates that persons eligible for such housing must be in receipt of income not exceeding the amount of Old Age Assistance plus the cost-of-living bonus. If selection is only in terms of financial need, old persons may well find themselves isolated with those of exactly the same income. Of course, it could hardly be expected that old persons with really high incomes would be selected, since they would not have the same priority in competing for rental accommodation. But is it really essential that they must be dependent only on pensions? Is there not room for people small incomes, no matter how derived, and with a different kind of eligibility maximum?

It would appear that if housing projects are deliberately designed for the low-income group, economic segregation cannot be avoided. However, Albert Rose maintains that there should be some attempt at economic diversification and balance in tenant selection, possibly forty per cent of the tenants within the lowest income group and forty per cent in the middle of the income range, and the remaining twenty per cent chosen from the upper limits of the income range.¹ This is not always possible when "need" is frequently greatest in the lowest income group (pensioners), and there is not enough low-cost housing to go around. New Vista accepts for its housing those with the greatest need, without requiring that they must be a pensioner. As previously mentioned this need is assessed from the criteria of adequacy of present housing, income, and health.

**Variety of Accommodation**

Back as far as 1949 the Vancouver Housing Association suggested that a variety of accommodation was required in housing the aged, and that different types of accommodation should be integrated within one project.² This facilitates the movement of the individual from one type of dwelling to another without forcing them to break the ties established in the community. The provision of a diversification of types of dwellings - all the way from completely self-contained suites to boarding homes,

offers flexibility of programme which is essential for the welfare of aged persons in a broader sense. New Vista provides a fairly large variety of accommodation within its nine projects. The Society made the first "experiment" in housing the single old person, recognizing after the first influx of applications that the single old age pensioner was even more financially disadvantaged than a couple on old age pension. As has been previously mentioned, there are now three kinds of dwellings at New Vista for both married couples and single persons. These are; duplex bungalows, apartment suites, and special apartments for arthritis sufferers. There is no provision for special or domiciliary care within the project itself, hence, the old person at New Vista must be able to maintain himself. Consideration is given to persons over eighty for apartments; persons over seventy are more likely to be accommodated in the duplexes. The Society has quite rightly felt that persons over eighty are generally less able to assume the additional responsibilities involved in the duplexes e.g. gardening, whereas, the man or woman aged around seventy is often still desirous of some physical exercise. It has been found that short-term illness can usually be cared for at home because of separate bedrooms in all couple's suites. In the case of the single person, temporary illness is often cared for right in their own accommodation also. The neighbours in the project, it has been found, provide the first and most acceptable resource in home-care of other ill tenants.
It must be generally agreed, however, as Miss Sharp was led to underline that;

"In planning for variety in accommodation, illness is one of the eventualities that should be recognized and carefully considered by the sponsors. A project which houses old people is going to be a project in which illness will occur with great frequency; to turn the tenant out when he becomes ill is not an adequate solution. Ideally, housing projects should be planned in coordination with other health and welfare facilities, so that when illness does occur, there is some provision for the individual."\(^1\)

New Vista has considered this factor, and is aided by being near several nursing and boarding homes. In British Columbia, licensed nursing homes are considered the responsibility of the provincial government, and the Federal Government makes no provision for loans to help building societies construct or administer such projects. Cooperative arrangements accordingly are very important. They have not been made, or the problem of the invalid solved, in all projects.

**Administration**

In planning housing projects for senior citizens, a good physical lay-out is simply not enough. As Lewis Mumford states;

"... we must not for a moment imagine that the architect himself, even when backed by ample financial resources, can provide the answers that are needed, or that beauty and order and convenience alone are sufficient."\(^2\)

It is important that the planning of the project should try to provide a warm, friendly atmosphere which aids in the adjustment.

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1. Sharp, Patricia Louise, *loc.cit.*; p. 74
of the older individual. Housing projects to serve their purpose, must not merely provide shelter, but also the opportunity for more rewarding, and reasonably satisfying life. This hopefully is the goal of administration.

Albert Rose points out that it is necessary that any staff of housing projects, devoted to the provision of accommodation for older people, should be prepared to deal with the human problems that "inevitably arise when people move into a new and strange situation". At New Vista there is a strong belief in the worth of the individual and a real concern for the welfare of aged people generally. The project was founded by a man - Ernest Winch - who devoted his life to the furtherance of welfare in all parts of the community, and it continues to be run by his associates with the same spirit. The management has shown enlightened understanding of problems which have arisen from the tenant group; and a measure of professional help comes from a group worker who is one of the Board of Directors. The eventuality must be faced, however, that the originators of the "Vista Idea" cannot always be expected to carry out actively both administration and management of a project that houses almost three hundred persons. The future would indicate that professional management will be required, on a salary basis. The realization by the Board of Directors of New Vista, already well in evidence, that "housing is not enough"

1. Rose, Albert, loc.cit., p. 35.
- although it is a very great deal, when provided as well as they provide it - gives the keynote for further development of professional management, which can contribute to the efficiency of the project without disturbing any of the public spirited and human values of the project as it exists presently. There is an indication also that professional leadership is needed for group programmes and perhaps some other social work liaison within the project because of the lag in the provision of community services of this type. These considerations are naturally based on the assumption of sufficient financial resources; the lack of money has too often impeded the development of more diversified programmes.

The administration of New Vista is characterized by strong acceptance of the feeling that programmes imposed on people are never as successful as those initiated by the persons themselves, although the possibility of enabling them to plan more imaginatively has been cited. As Albert Rose so succinctly observes:

"No matter how benevolent the administration staff may be, through personal inclination or as a matter of policy, the basic objective is not the creation of a benevolent autocracy or benevolent paternalism... To the extent that the tenants of Canadian public housing develop a sense of responsibility and participation, to that extent will the basic objectives of public housing, namely the provision of adequate shelter and an opportunity for a fuller life in an adequate community setting, be realized."¹

When Dr. Rose made this statement he had general housing projects in mind, not a project with old people as its residents only,

¹ Rose, Albert, loc.cit., p. 37.
but New Vista shows that "senior" citizens can be active citizens. At New Vista the tenants themselves organized their Tenant Recreation Association; and they provide quite a variety of activities for themselves. The group-worker who is a member of the Board gives assistance only when asked by the Tenant's Association. Thus The New Vista Society practices the principle of "self-determination" for the tenant, leaving the individual free to pursue his own "course", but standing ready to "unsnarl" difficulties if they arise between tenant and tenant, or between tenant and Society.

Conclusions

As Patricia Sharp observed of the four housing projects for old people, reviewed in her study, very few persons move out of these projects once they move into them.\(^1\) Security of tenure and low rent are always strong arguments for remaining in this type of housing. The tenants at New Vista in general express warm appreciation of their accommodation and many are frank in their desire to remain there until they die. The argument may be advanced, that many elderly people of low income expect little and therefore are willing to settle for "a roof over their heads", but New Vista's experience seems to demonstrate much more than this. They have shown an understanding of the emotional as well as the physical needs of the tenants; and there is a great deal in the principles they have evolved from good sense and realistic experience which deserves

\(^1\) Sharp, Patricia Louise, loc.cit., p. 80.
consideration for application elsewhere.

The stage is perhaps being set for the time when general housing projects can learn from old people's housing projects, and old people's projects may learn not only from public housing, but from each other. So far in British Columbia there has been far greater concern with housing the older person than public housing for all low-income groups. In greater Vancouver presently there are more than 400 units for married couples in the aged group, and some 254 units for the single old age pensioner. A score or more private groups have contributed to this number of units. Housing for low-income groups as a whole has had to wait for the establishment of the Vancouver Housing Authority in 1955. The city is now sponsoring further extension, and Orchard Park is being added, for the need is being recognized, to include a proportion of housing for both couples and single old people in public housing. Little Mountain, the pioneer unit of public housing in Vancouver has been accepting old people as eligible for its project and Orchard Park now is extending to single old people for the first time. The integration of all age groups in subsidized public housing projects is to be encouraged to replace "segregation" by"community".

Housing projects for old people are obviously meeting a real need in the community by providing good low-rental housing, but they all show the need for a greater integration of general

services for the aged. This is not a matter for the sponsors of housing projects only. The Community Chest and Council Division on the Welfare of the Aged is moving toward a greater integration of housing services for the aged group through a Housing Registry; also a recently proposed Federation of Senior Citizen's Housing Organizations. Public and private welfare agencies have a role to play in the provision of a more well-rounded and comprehensive programme for aged people generally. An attempt for a more concerted and comprehensive approach to the problems of the aged would seem to be a matter of community organization. There is a definite place for the professional worker in both group work and casework, as well as the lay volunteer from service clubs and elsewhere. Both private and public agencies, and lay and professional workers, however, can profit from pooling the experience of existing projects; and it is as a contribution to this end that the documentation of one of the most successful "self-help" projects has been undertaken.
THE NEW VISTA SOCIETY’S TENANCY AGREEMENT

I, the undersigned applicant as tenant of No.____________ of The New Vista Society Senior Citizens’ residential accommodation in the Municipality of Burnaby, hereby agree in consideration of the Society permitting the occupancy by me of the said accommodation as a tenant from month to month, to abide by and be governed by the following conditions relating to such tenancy:

1. The tenancy hereby executed shall be on a monthly basis dating from the first day of the month and may be terminated at any time by either the Society or by the tenant on 5 weeks’ notice in writing. Such notice to be given one week prior to a rent day.

2. All rents must be paid promptly to the Society or its agent, monthly in advance.
   No person other than those to whom the accommodation is rented will be allowed to reside on the premises without the consent of the Society.
   Tenants must keep the premises clean and in good order.
   On vacating, premises must be left clean, otherwise tenants will be charged for cleaning.

3. No tenant shall do, or permit to be done, in their premises, anything which may tend to the annoyance of other tenants.
   No vocal or instrumental music, or use of radio or gramophone, shall be allowed before 8:00 a.m. or after 10:15 p.m., and no loud or disturbing noise at any time. THIS WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED.

4. Tenants must not drive nails or tacks in the walls or woodwork. On request, reasonable requirements will be done by the Society’s agent.
   Linoleum or Congoleum rugs must not be laid on floors unless the area under them is completely covered with strong brown paper or several layers of newspaper.
   Heat-proof covers the full size of heaters must be placed under them to protect the floors, also metal screens between heater and walls.
   Cups must be placed under legs of all heavy pieces of furniture.

5. Any damage to any part of the building or premises caused through the action, neglect, or carelessness of the tenant, or any member of his or her family, shall be repaired and made good by the tenant under the direction of the Society’s representative, and stoppage of plumbing, if caused by carelessness or neglect of the person using same, will be at the tenant’s own cost for clearing.

6. Broken windows must be replaced at tenant’s expense.

7. No painting, papering, or redecorating shall be done by tenants without permission of the Society, and no subletting of premises will be permitted.

8. Tenants shall not willfully waste, or permit to be wasted, water furnished by the Society and in the case of leaky taps or toilets, will please notify the owners. The lawns, use of outside taps and watering of gardens are under the control of the Society.

9. All garbage must be drained, well wrapped, and tied before being placed in the garbage can.

10. Heating of apartments is by atmospheric control at a uniform daily temperature of 70 degrees. Windows and doors must NOT be left open during cold weather.

11. The fire escapes are for use as emergency exits only; any use of them is solely at tenant's own risk.

12. The day, time and period of use of laundry facilities in the apartment blocks are subject to prior arrangement with the janitor.

13. Selection of the channel showing on the television in the lounge of Project No. 7 is under the exclusive control of the Society’s representative.

14. Young children visiting tenants in the apartments are not permitted to run or play in the corridors or on the stairs.

15. All property stored on the premises will be at the tenant’s risk as to loss or damage from any cause whatever, including water, moisture, fire, or theft. Tenants will be responsible for insurance on their own furniture and other personal belongings.

16. Tenants in upstairs apartments of Project No. 6 are required to keep stairs clean, the responsibility to be shared on an alternative weekly arrangement.

17. The Society reserves the right for authorized officials to enter and inspect all premises at any reasonable time, and to change these regulations from time to time at its sole discretion.

18. Tenants planning absence on a visit should notify adjacent tenant and the Society’s representative.

19. Dogs are not allowed on the premises.

20. On the back hereof, please give name and address of relatives or friends whom you wish contacted in case of emergency.

DATED at B.C. this day of A.D. 19

Witness

Tenant
APPENDIX B

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